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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, March 22, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "VEGETABLE GARDEN QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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One of the letters in this week's mailbag inquires about growing iron in the garden. I know that sounds odd--how to grow your own iron. But let me read you the letter.

"I have been hearing lately that many American families aren't getting enough iron in their three meals a day. So I have resolved to feed my family more food that is rich in iron. One way I plan to do this is to grow more iron foods in my garden. Will you tell me which vegetables rank highest in iron? And then will you send me information on growing them?"

This happens to be a very timely question because some of the best foods in iron are the so-called spring vegetables--the spring greens like turnip and beet tops, and dandelion and mustard greens, and so on, as well as the watercress that grows in gently flowing cool streams. You see, the deep green leafy vegetables are the ones that rank high in iron--and in other minerals and vitamin A as well.

Turnip and beet tops are "tops" among vegetables for iron. Dandelion and mustard greens are also rich in this mineral. So are chard and kale, spinach and broccoli leaves, and the watercress that adds flavor and crispness to spring salads.

Vegetables of the bean and pea family are also good sources of iron, either green or dry--lima beans, common or kidney beans, soybeans, lentils, garden peas and blackeye peas.

And the dried fruits like apricots, peaches, currants, and--but there. I'm wandering from my subject. This listener only asked about iron-rich vegetables.

In answer to the question about growing these vegetables. I suggest that she write her state college or ask the agricultural agent in her county for any State publications on vegetable gardening.

The Department of Agriculture in Washington also has bulletins on the subject-- "Subsistence Farm Gardens," Farmers' Bulletine No. 1746. It tells about growing vegetables on a small scale--growing for family use rather than to sell. This publication advises on growing plenty of vegetables to serve fresh during the summer and to can and store for winter use. If you have a half-acre garden, this bulletin will tell you how to put it to best use. In it, you will find information on growing 20 of the most important garden vegetables (as well as 5 of the small fruits and 5 of the standard tree fruits.) What's more, the bulletin includes information about the disease and insects that may attack each different vegetable and what to do about them.

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You will find in this bulletin advice on growing kale, spinach, beets, Swiss chard, beans and peas -- to mention a few of the iron-rich vegetables.

So here's one volume for every listener's garden library. The name is "Subsistence Farm Gardens." The number is 1746. And you get your copy by writing to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Now for the listeners who live in town and are interested in growing vegetables in a large backyard or vacant lot, there is another special bulletin. This goes by the name of "The City Home Garden." It's number is 1044. And you order it also from the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C.

According to this leaflet, green vegetables and salad plants are especially adapted to the small garden as they take up little space and will withstand more or less shading. They need a deep rich soil with plenty of moisture. And they will thrive under comparatively cool conditions. The bulletin for the city home gardener gives directions for growing such iron-rich vegetables as Swiss chard, spinach, kale, collards, turnips, beets, beans and peas.

Just recently the Department of Agriculture has been publishing a series of small leaflets for truck gardeners or for those who are raising vegetables commercially. One of these new leaflets is on kale, another on spinach, another on turnips and rutabagas, another on cauliflower and broccoli and so on. If you are interested in any one particular vegetable, you may want to write for one of these new leaflets which goes into considerable detail on commercial growing.

But in general -- in general, bulletins 1746 or 1044 are the ones for the home gardener.

Getting back to the subject of iron in the diet, you may be interested to know that the scientists now believe that soil and even variety may have considerable to do with the amount of iron in a vegetable. If the soil is rich in iron, the vegetable will probably contain more iron. Then, too, the water that the vegetable is cooked in may add to the iron content, if the water happens to contain iron. Perhaps you've heard that the rusty pump has its advantages. It puts more iron in the family's drinking water. And a recent experiment station study in Mississippi showed that even iron pots and kettles contributed their bit to the iron in the diet.

Every little bit helps in providing the family with its quota of iron for good red blood. But probably most important of all is to use plenty of iron-rich foods in family meals -- eggs, and meat, particularly meat organs like liver, kidney and heart, and also those good green vegetables that we've been talking about; and to cook them so that the family will enjoy them and call for second helpings.
